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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the seventh report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). It provides a comprehensive assessment of the steps taken to implement resolution 1701 (2006) since the previous report of the Secretary-General was issued on 28 February 2008 (S/2008/135) and highlights both the progress made in the implementation of the resolution and areas of concern that continue to impede the establishment of a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution between the parties. The present report also proposes measures that could be undertaken by the parties in the coming months with a view to achieving a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution to the 2006 conflict.

2. I am pleased that all parties continue to express their commitment to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Nothing less than such a commitment to the principles and the concrete provisions of resolution 1701 (2006), accompanied by concrete steps towards achieving the goals set by the resolution, could lead to the achievement of a permanent ceasefire and a lasting solution between Israel and Lebanon.

3. The reporting period was characterized for the most part by the continuation of the prolonged political crisis in Lebanon, which culminated early in May in an extremely serious deterioration of the domestic security situation. In protest of two Government decisions taken on 6 May 2008, Hizbullah and other opposition groups took control of and closed roads leading to Beirut International Airport as well as other key roads in parts of the capital. In response, pro-Government groups closed the main border crossing between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Those actions brought the country to a standstill. Armed clashes between opposition and pro-Government groups, which on occasion included the use of heavy weapons, spread rapidly in several parts of the country. During the clashes that occurred from 8 to 13 May 2008, 69 people died, including a number of civilians, and more than 180 were injured.

4. Following the efforts of the League of Arab States and the crucial mediation role played by the Government of Qatar, Lebanon started to emerge from the political crisis that had paralysed the normal functioning of State institutions for the past year and a half. The Doha agreement reached on 21 May 2008 established the

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basis for resolving the long-standing dispute regarding power-sharing arrangements between the majority and the opposition in a Government of national unity and included an understanding on electoral issues relating to the 2009 parliamentary elections. In addition, the agreement included a commitment from all sides to refrain from the use of weapons or violence to achieve political gains. It also provided for the launching of a dialogue on the reinforcement of the authority of the State of Lebanon over its territory. Following the Doha agreement, President Sleiman was elected on 25 May 2008, six months after the office had become vacant. Negotiations for the formation of a new national unity Government are ongoing.

5. There were no breaches of the cessation of hostilities, and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) continued its activities with the parties to ensure full respect for the Blue Line. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces have continued their efforts to ensure that the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River is not utilized for hostile activities and is free of any unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons. Cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces has continued to be good.

II. Implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

6. The military and security situation in the UNIFIL area of operations remained generally quiet. The parties reiterated their commitment to uphold the cessation of hostilities. While the clashes in Beirut and other areas of the country early in May did not spread to the UNIFIL area of operations, political instability in the country resulted in increased volatility in the area. There were also a number of incidents during the reporting period, on occasion raising tensions in the area of operations. Some of those incidents, in particular that of 31 March 2008, during which armed elements blocked a UNIFIL patrol, constituted violations of resolution 1701 (2006) and served to undermine UNIFIL efforts to build trust and confidence between the parties and with the population of southern Lebanon.

A. Respect for the Blue Line

7. The parties continued to generally respect the Blue Line. Besides the unchanged situation in the village of Ghajar and the small adjacent area north of the Blue Line, a few ground violations were reported, especially in the area of the Shab'a Farms, where the Blue Line is neither visibly marked nor easily recognizable on the ground. The Lebanese Armed Forces alleged that a group of Israel Defense Forces soldiers had violated the Blue Line on 13 April 2008 near United Nations position 4-7C in the Shab'a Farms area. On 13 May 2008, the Israel Defense Forces apprehended and temporarily detained a Lebanese shepherd who the Israel Defense Forces alleged had crossed the Blue Line in the same area. UNIFIL investigations into both incidents were not able to confirm or refute the allegations. In response, UNIFIL, in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces, established additional observation posts in the area. UNIFIL also reported a number of minor ground violations by local Lebanese shepherds. As noted in my previous reports, such violations, which in some cases may be inadvertent, could lead to unintentional incidents and an unintended escalation of tension. UNIFIL protested all violations

and explored, in bilateral discussions and in the tripartite forum, ways of preventing further ones.

8. There has been some progress made with respect to the pilot project of visibly marking a 6-kilometre stretch of the Blue Line, which UNIFIL is carrying out jointly with the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces. Since my last report, an additional seven Blue Line barrels have been positioned, verified and confirmed by the two parties, bringing the total number of barrels in place to nine. To build on that progress, and upon the request of the parties, UNIFIL is discussing, at the bilateral level, the issue of the extension of the pilot project to other areas. However, I am concerned that the process is beginning to slow down, and I urge the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces to remain focused on a practical and constructive approach in this endeavour and to continue their cooperation with UNIFIL. I reiterate the importance of visibly marking the Blue Line in order to reduce the number of inadvertent violations on the ground and to build confidence.

9. The pumping by Israel of accumulated flood water from Israeli to Lebanese territory in the vicinity of the town of Kafr Kila, located in close proximity to the Blue Line in the UNIFIL eastern sector, prompted a number of small demonstrations by affected Lebanese farmers. UNIFIL defused tensions by pumping the water into water trucks for dispersal elsewhere. Following discussions at the bilateral level and in the tripartite forum, UNIFIL submitted a proposal to the parties concerning measures aimed at preventing this problem from recurring at the time of the next seasonal rains. The Lebanese side has agreed to the proposal, while a response from the Israeli side is pending.

10. During the reporting period, UNIFIL recorded and protested an unprecedented number of violations by Israel of Lebanese airspace by aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles. Those violations occurred almost daily, at an average rate of more than 20 violations per day in March and April. On 16 April 2008 alone, UNIFIL recorded 72 violations by unmanned aerial vehicles. The number of air violations in May and June decreased, but remained at levels higher than had been recorded prior to February 2008.

11. The Government of Lebanon continues to protest the overflights by Israel as serious violations of the sovereignty of Lebanon and of resolution 1701 (2006). The Government of Israel maintains that they are necessary security measures that will continue until its two abducted soldiers are released and the measures set out in paragraphs 14 and 15 of resolution 1701 (2006) are implemented in full. All overflights by Israel of Lebanese territory constitute violations of Lebanese sovereignty and of resolution 1701 (2006).

12. No new information has come to light as a result of the investigations into the two rocket attacks against Israel of 17 June 2007 and 8 January 2008. I reiterate my call on the authorities of Lebanon to continue their efforts to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

B. Security and liaison arrangements

13. The regular tripartite meetings with senior representatives of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces, chaired by the UNIFIL Force

Commander, continued to be an essential confidence-building mechanism between the parties. The two sides demonstrate a strong commitment to that forum, which aims to enhance liaison and coordination and to address key security and military operational issues, including violations of resolution 1701 (2006) and the findings of UNIFIL investigations into incidents.

14. The Israel Defense Forces remained in control of part of the village of Ghajar and a small adjacent area north of the Blue Line. Hence, Israel has not completed its withdrawal from southern Lebanon in accordance with its obligations under resolution 1701 (2006). This is a continuous source of tension, which could easily escalate. In an effort to break the impasse and facilitate the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces, UNIFIL submitted a new proposal to the parties and is awaiting their response.

15. Following the shooting incidents that occurred in November 2007 and February 2008 in the vicinity of Ghajar, which were detailed in my previous report, UNIFIL implemented a series of security measures to prevent violations of the Blue Line and smuggling activities, in accordance with an agreement reached with the parties during the April tripartite meeting. Those measures included the laying of concertina wire and better lighting of the northern and western approaches to the village, as well as the clearing of a patrol path on the western perimeter up to the Blue Line. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces also intensified patrolling in the area. Since mid-May, UNIFIL has been conducting two daily foot patrols along the western patrol path leading to the Blue Line in the area under the control of the Israel Defense Forces.

16. The UNIFIL area of operations is effectively controlled by the combined presence of UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces, which contributes to greater peace and stability in southern Lebanon. UNIFIL currently maintains 64 permanent positions and 136 observation posts. UNIFIL troops conduct almost 400 vehicle, foot and air patrols, day and night, during each 24-hour period throughout the area of operations, in both rural and urban areas. The Lebanese Armed Forces remains deployed in the area of operations, with four brigades of different sizes, and continues to operate an average of 115 checkpoints and observation posts, as well as 26 patrols per day. In addition, joint training exercises and coordinated activities with UNIFIL have continued, with a view to enhancing the operational capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces. During the armed clashes in Beirut and other parts of the country early in May, the Lebanese Armed Forces redeployed a number of units out of the UNIFIL area of operations to fulfil its security obligations elsewhere. While the Lebanese Armed Forces continued to carry out its responsibilities in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006), the redeployment of its units away from the UNIFIL area of operations for prolonged periods could have an impact on its coordinated operational activities with UNIFIL and their overall operational tempo. The competing security responsibilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces, compounded by the fact that it lacks adequate military equipment, limit its military readiness.

17. In April, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces conducted the first session of a strategic review of the military tasks carried out by the two Forces as part of the ongoing efforts to further develop and strengthen coordination and liaison procedures. Agreement was reached on a number of concrete measures: to increase the number of daily counter-rocket-launching operations and expand their coverage from areas adjacent to the Blue Line to other parts of the area of operations; to

enhance efforts to deter and prevent hunting activities in the area of operations; to intensify surveillance in areas near the Blue Line; and to operate co-located checkpoints and increase the number of vehicle checks. In addition, it was agreed that liaison and interaction at the operational and tactical levels should be improved.

18. As a result, since the beginning of May, coordinated operations between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces have increased in frequency and complexity. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces operate daily six co-located checkpoints that are in proximity to one another on the Litani River, in addition to two such checkpoints elsewhere in the area of operations and four coordinated foot patrols along the Blue Line. Moreover, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces conduct 10 counter-rocket-launching operations every day during which troops patrol a selected area by vehicle and on foot and establish temporary observation posts and checkpoints to stop and check vehicles and persons moving in the area. A follow-up session of the strategic review took place in the first half of June.

19. Ensuring that the area south of the Litani River is free of unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons, as stipulated in resolution 1701 (2006) and pursuant to the decisions taken in July and August 2006 by the Cabinet of Lebanon, is a vital element of the security arrangements. Since my previous report, coordinated operations undertaken by UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces have resulted in the discovery of 92 items, including abandoned arms, ammunition and explosive devices. Among those were two rockets, 25 artillery shells and 26 mortar rounds, in addition to six former armed-element facilities, one of which was protected by a booby trap. There were no signs that the installations had been used recently. All of the equipment, arms and ammunition discovered were from the period of the 2006 conflict or before. The Lebanese Armed Forces has confirmed that it destroys or confiscates all arms and ammunition found south of the Litani River.

20. Israel maintains that Hizbullah is continuing to build its military presence and capacity, largely north of the Litani River but also in the UNIFIL area of operations, in both open and urban areas, including in private houses. UNIFIL, in collaboration with the Lebanese Armed Forces, immediately investigates any claims of alleged violations of resolution 1701 (2006) within its area of operations if specific information and evidence is received. To date, it has found no evidence of new military infrastructure in the area of operations. However, UNIFIL did encounter unauthorized armed personnel on one occasion during the night of 30 to 31 March 2008, in an incident described in paragraph 21 below. In addition, past attacks on UNIFIL and rocket attacks against Israel have demonstrated that there are unauthorized arms and hostile groups prepared to use them, including within the UNIFIL area of operations.

21. During the reporting period, several incidents highlighted the challenges that UNIFIL faces in fulfilling its mandated activities. During the night of 30 to 31 March, a UNIFIL patrol observed a truck towing a trailer, which it considered suspicious, near the village of Jibal al-Butm, in the UNIFIL western sector. As the patrol turned around and started to follow the truck, two cars with five armed elements arrived at the scene and blocked the road. The patrol challenged the armed elements, who did not respond. The armed elements left the area after approximately three minutes. Meanwhile, the truck and the trailer moved on and could not later be located. The Lebanese Armed Forces was notified and arrived quickly at the location. An investigation was launched immediately, and UNIFIL and Lebanese

Armed Forces patrols combed the area. However, efforts to locate or identify the perpetrators were unsuccessful. The presence of armed elements in the UNIFIL area of operations is a flagrant and serious violation of resolution 1701 (2006). The incident also constitutes an obstruction of the Force's freedom of movement.

22. Following the incident, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces further intensified their coordinated activities and increased the number of checkpoints so as to enhance overall security control in the area of operations. As a result, 25 old inert shells were discovered in a civilian vehicle at a UNIFIL-Lebanese Armed Forces checkpoint near Kafr Shuba on 15 April. The two occupants of the vehicle were arrested by the Lebanese Armed Forces and are still under investigation.

23. On 12 May 2008, another serious incident occurred in the vicinity of Adchit al-Qusair, in the eastern sector of the area of operations, where a UNIFIL patrol had photographed cables that were being laid in the ground that appeared to be suspicious. In response, civilians at the site photographed and threw stones at the UNIFIL patrol and impeded its freedom of movement by blocking the road with two vehicles. The situation was complicated by language barriers between the UNIFIL patrol, Lebanese Armed Forces personnel and local civilians. However, the situation improved when all the parties agreed to discard all photographs taken at the scene. Several armed Lebanese security personnel in civilian clothes arrived later.

24. The incident also serves as an example of the challenges UNIFIL sometimes faces in carrying out its operational activities. As has been reported previously, its operational activities are on occasion closely monitored by unarmed civilians. In addition, its use of photographic and recording devices in the area of operations remains an extremely sensitive issue, even though the Force ensures that audio/video recording and photography are carried out in full compliance with United Nations policy, which authorizes the use of photographic and other electronic devices in the accomplishment of mandated tasks. UNIFIL is increasing awareness of that policy among the Lebanese Armed Forces and the local population.

25. A third incident, on 10 May 2008, involved a UNIFIL peacekeeper serving with the Nepalese contingent who was slightly injured by a stray bullet that entered through the roof of his accommodation at United Nations position 8-30, north of the town of Meis al-Jabal, in the eastern sector of the UNIFIL area of operations. A UNIFIL investigation found that several rounds had hit the compound, possibly fired in the air by mourners attending the funeral of a member of the Lebanese security forces. UNIFIL reiterated to the Lebanese Armed Forces the need to make every effort to prevent such firing of weapons in future.

26. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force continues to perform maritime interdiction operations along the Lebanese coast to prevent the entry of unauthorized arms and related materiel. Since the Task Force assumed its mission in mid-October 2006, more than 15,600 ships have been hailed and queried. Over 100 vessels were identified as suspicious, but subsequently were inspected and cleared by Lebanese naval or customs officials. There are Lebanese naval liaison officers on board the ship commanding the maritime interdiction operations as well as at UNIFIL headquarters. On 17 March 2008, the Maritime Task Force electronically detected a vessel entering the UNIFIL area of maritime operations from Israeli waters without having followed proper procedure, briefly violating Lebanese territorial waters south of Naqura. In response to queries, the Israel Defense Forces stated that no

Israeli navy vessel had entered Lebanese territorial waters. On 22 and 23 May, the Lebanese Armed Forces protested the alleged hailing by the Israel Defense Forces navy of two ships in Lebanese territorial waters. The Israel Defense Forces acknowledged hailing, on 22 May, a passenger vessel coming from Larnaca, Cyprus, and heading to Naqura that was being utilized for UNIFIL troop rotation. UNIFIL was not in a position to ascertain the facts concerning the second alleged hailing, on 23 May 2008. Such hailing of vessels in Lebanese territorial waters contravenes the liaison and coordination arrangements agreed between the parties and UNIFIL and undermines the mission of the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force.

27. The joint training programme between the UNIFIL and Lebanese Armed Forces maritime forces continued. Following completion of the establishment of the Coastal Radar Organization, training efforts are now focused on improving the operational integration of Lebanese navy units with the Coastal Radar Organization and the capabilities of Lebanese navy personnel in such areas as boarding and surface surveillance, in addition to tactical exercises. It remains of critical importance that the intensive training programme for Lebanese navy personnel be complemented by continued material and technical support over the medium to long term so as to enable the Lebanese navy to assume responsibilities and tasks presently performed by the Maritime Task Force. I am grateful to the Government of Germany for having donated one naval vessel, the third in total, to the Lebanese navy. The donation of that former German navy patrol boat represents a significant enhancement of the naval equipment of Lebanon.

28. Coordination and liaison with the Israel Defense Forces remained good and efficient. UNIFIL maintains a liaison office with two officers at the Israel Defense Forces Northern Command headquarters in Zefat. Preparations for the establishment of the Tel Aviv office have reached an advanced stage. Under the direct command of the Force Commander, the office will be an essential and integral part of the Force's coordination and liaison with the Israel Defense Forces, focusing at the strategic headquarters level, with a view to advancing the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Current discussions centre on the final modalities and technical aspects of the office and are expected to be concluded soon. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is in the process of identifying a candidate, at the rank of Brigadier-General, to head the office.

29. UNIFIL maintained close relations with the local communities and, with some exceptions as noted above, the population's attitude towards the Force remained generally positive throughout the reporting period. UNIFIL continued its humanitarian assistance activities, including medical and dental services, veterinary assistance and small-scale engineering support to improve the local communities' infrastructure, as well as the identification and disposal of unexploded ordnance. The UNIFIL civil-military cooperation and civil affairs components continued to implement quick-impact projects for the benefit of local communities, funded by troop-contributing countries and from the Force's budget. Such projects remain essential for UNIFIL to build confidence and support among the local population. Importantly, the Force also launched its community outreach programme, which is aimed at increasing the local population's understanding of the UNIFIL mandate and at responding to its concerns.

C. Disarming armed groups

30. The Government of Israel has reiterated its position concerning Hizbullah armament, military presence and capacity north of the Litani River, as detailed in my previous report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2008/135). It has also reiterated its assertions regarding the sources of the transfer of such weapons.

31. The violence that engulfed Lebanon early in May demonstrated yet again the serious threat that armed groups outside of the control of the State pose to the stability of Lebanon. Hizbullah and other groups engaged in heavy clashes in many regions throughout the country, resulting in loss of life, injuries, damage to property and general instability. Those events were a stark reminder of the urgency and importance of ensuring that there are no weapons in the country without the consent of the Government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon.

32. As I have indicated in previous reports, I continue to believe that the disarmament of Hizbullah and other militias should take place through a Lebanese-led political process. I am encouraged that in Doha Lebanese leaders provided for the launching of a dialogue to promote the State's authority over all Lebanese territory and its relationship with the various groups in Lebanon in order to ensure the security of the State and of its citizens. The leaders agreed to prohibit the use of weapons or violence in any internal conflict that may arise, to implement the law and to uphold the sovereignty of the State throughout Lebanon. The leaders committed themselves to pursuing the dialogue under the auspices of the President once the Government is established and with the participation of the Arab League, in a way that would reinforce trust among the Lebanese people.

33. Another serious threat to the stability and sovereignty of Lebanon is posed by non-Lebanese armed groups. In my previous report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) (S/2008/264), I highlighted the threat posed by Palestinian and other armed groups inside and outside the 12 officially registered refugee camps. During the reporting period, there were several incidents in or around Palestinian camps, in particular in and around the Ein el-Hilweh camp in Sidon, around the Nahr al-Bared camp in northern Lebanon, as well as near the city of Tripoli in the north. Seven people were killed and 26 injured as a result. In one of those incidents, which occurred on 31 May 2008 near the entrance of Nahr al-Bared, a Lebanese Armed Forces outpost was targeted by an explosion that killed one soldier.

D. Arms embargo

34. In my previous report to the Council, and in accordance with the request of the Council contained in its presidential statement of 3 August 2007 (S/PRST/2007/29), I indicated my intention to dispatch to Lebanon a team of experts to carry out a detailed assessment of the implementation of the recommendations of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team. Due to the deterioration of the security situation in Lebanon early in May and the resignation of the Government of Lebanon later that month, it was not possible to dispatch the team during the reporting period. Preparations are under way for the team to travel to Lebanon as

soon as possible. A detailed report to the Security Council of the team's findings will follow in due course.

35. Since I last reported on this issue, there has been no significant change in the border security arrangements along the eastern frontier of Lebanon with the Syrian Arab Republic. While the Government of Lebanon has sought to upgrade certain security arrangements, the potential remains for breaches of the arms embargo under resolution 1701 (2006). That is due to the general porosity that continues to prevail along most of the border.

36. The Government of Lebanon has maintained the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces along the border. However, the significant deterioration in the security situation throughout Lebanon during the reporting period continued to place great demands on the army in terms of operational requirements and human resources. During the events of early May 2008, several units from the eastern border were redeployed to meet security challenges in other parts of the country. Support has continued from the Internal Security Forces to compensate for the redeployment.

37. There has been no change regarding the continued presence of the heavily armed positions belonging to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada that straddle the border. As noted in my previous reports, that anomaly effectively gives such groups, which operate outside the authority of the State of Lebanon, practical control of that part of the border. The Lebanese Armed Forces maintains its defensive encirclement of those positions on the Lebanese side of the frontier in order to reduce the potential threat that the situation poses to the security and stability of the State of Lebanon.

38. The Government of Lebanon has continued its efforts to enhance its border-management capacity. In that regard, and with international support, the Lebanese authorities have continued to work towards the implementation of some of the recommendations of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team.

39. The Lebanese Common Border Force, deployed along the northern border of Lebanon with the Syrian Arab Republic in the context of the German-led pilot project, operates a regular rotation of joint patrols, mobile and fixed checkpoints and observation points throughout its area of operations. The force has continued to build its capacity and cohesion through an ongoing training programme that has allowed it to become more independent in key aspects of its operational work.

40. During the reporting period, the Lebanese Common Border Force uncovered numerous cases of smuggling, mostly involving fuel and other consumer products. No incidents of weapons smuggling were observed. The force has taken measures to close the illegal routes used by smugglers and is working to enhance facilities and procedures at the official crossing points. In that regard, I welcome the completion of the relocation of the crossing point at Aboudieh to the banks of the Nahr el-Kabir River, in line with a key recommendation of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team. However, owing to the prevailing political and security situation in the country during the reporting period, there has been little progress in the continued integration of the principal security services of Lebanon in the context of the Common Border Force.

41. The Lebanese authorities, with support from international donors, have also worked to improve the capacity of Lebanon to control its borders in other areas

through new initiatives. A comprehensive project is being launched at Beirut International Airport, including a new joint operations room, a multi-agency training component and explosive-disposal, canine and naval security units. Other ongoing initiatives include the delivery of additional scanners to be used by Lebanese customs and the installation of a new facility operated by General Security to detect forged documents. The Lebanese customs authorities also undertook a recruitment drive aimed at increasing the number of qualified personnel as part of their objective of ensuring more effective control and monitoring mechanisms.

42. Lebanon has emphasized the need to establish cooperation on border management with Syrian counterparts. The Syrian Arab Republic, in a letter dated 6 March 2008 (A/62/725-S/2008/164), written in response to my sixth report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2008/135), denied that there had been arms smuggling from its territory. It also reconfirmed the information contained in paragraph 49 of that report regarding the number of border guards on the Syrian side, requests for technical equipment for Syrian personnel and the number of meetings between Lebanese and Syrian officials during the period from 2005 to 2007. Cooperation between the two countries on border control issues is essential to achieving good border management that benefits both countries. I call on both neighbours to work together towards this shared goal.

E. Landmines and cluster bombs

43. During the period from the end of the 2006 conflict through 19 June 2008, incidents involving unexploded ordnance, including cluster munitions, led to 27 civilian fatalities and 231 civilian injuries. Mine-clearance incidents have resulted in 13 mine-clearance fatalities and 38 injuries thus far.

44. The United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre — South Lebanon has coordinated the clearance and reduction of approximately 36.6 million m^2 of contaminated land, comprising 49 per cent of the surface and 29 per cent of the sub-surface areas, through a joint effort including the Lebanese Armed Forces, the United Nations, bilaterally funded clearance organizations and UNIFIL. In total, 145,580 cluster munitions have been located and destroyed. When operational planning began after the war, the size of the affected area was estimated at some 32 million m^2, but has now increased to 39.4 million m^2. Since my previous report, the Mine Action Coordination Centre has identified 21 additional cluster-bomb strike locations, bringing the total to 984 locations recorded thus far.

45. During the reporting period, there was no progress in terms of receiving from Israel precise technical strike data on the number, type and location of munitions fired during the 2006 conflict. In the absence of such technical strike data from Israel, the level of contamination remained uncertain. Efforts by the United Nations, both at Headquarters and in the field, to secure technical strike data regarding cluster munitions have persisted. This issue has been raised in the tripartite forum and bilaterally on a number of occasions by the UNIFIL Force Commander.

F. Abducted soldiers and prisoners

46. My facilitator is continuing to work on the negotiations related to the issue of the abducted Israeli soldiers and the Lebanese prisoners in Israel. Owing to the sensitivity of those negotiations, I am unable to report on this issue at this time.

G. Delineation of borders

47. Since my previous report, there has been no progress on the issue of Lebanese border delineation pursuant to paragraph 10 of resolution 1701 (2006). In its letter of 6 March 2008 (S/2008/164), the Syrian Arab Republic again stated that border demarcation was a bilateral matter pertaining to State sovereignty that should be resolved by the Governments of the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. In the letter, the Syrian Arab Republic also reiterated that it was prepared to begin demarcating the Syrian-Lebanese border, starting from the north for reasons of practical necessity because the southern part of the common border, including the Shab'a Farms, is under Israeli occupation. No concrete steps have been taken to start a process to demarcate the Syrian-Lebanese border in the north.

48. Following the Doha agreement, President Al-Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic made statements regarding the possible establishment of diplomatic relations between Lebanon and his country. That would constitute tangible and significant progress towards the formalization of relations between the two neighbouring countries and towards reaffirming the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon.

49. On the issue of the Shab'a Farms, I received a letter dated 2 April 2008 from Prime Minister Siniora welcoming the completion of the cartographic work on the geographical definition of the area referred to as the Shab'a Farms. The Prime Minister considered that the provisional definition contained in my report (S/2007/641) of 30 October 2007 provided a reasonable and practical basis for removing one of the obstacles standing in the way of the establishment of a permanent ceasefire in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006). I have not received any official responses to the provisional definition from the Syrian Arab Republic or Israel, despite my request. Nor have I received any response to my repeated requests for documents from the Syrian Arab Republic.

III. Security and safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

50. In the face of threats from some militant and extremist groups, including Al-Qaida, the se rity and safety of UNIFIL personnel remains a matter of particular concern. Notwithstanding the obligation of all parties to ensure the safety and security of UNIFIL and the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon for law and order, the Force continues to focus on mitigating risks to its personnel, assets and installations through infrastructure enhancement projects, information-gathering and analysis, as well as the ongoing acquisition of electronic countermeasures to jam explosive devices and micro-unmanned aerial vehicles. The unmanned aerial vehicles are to be utilized at the discretion of the Force Commander and represent a critical additional risk-mitigating asset to enhance

Force protection and civilian staff security. In accordance with the plans outlined in my previous report to increase the Force's intelligence capabilities, a Joint Mission Analysis Centre has been established that once fully staffed, will be able to enhance the Force's information analysis capacity.

51. In addition, UNIFIL continued to implement security enhancements throughout its area of operations through the construction of reinforced perimeter structures, permanent observation towers and underground reinforced shelters, as well as the replacement of temporary water and sanitation infrastructure in military positions.

52. Investigations continue into the 24 June 2007 attack against UNIFIL, which killed six peacekeepers serving with the Spanish contingent. The Governments of Lebanon and Spain have agreed to form a joint investigation team, which is expected to begin work shortly. UNIFIL will provide assistance to the team and looks forward to continuing to work with all parties to achieve progress in the investigation. The Lebanese authorities are continuing their investigations into two other attacks against UNIFIL, namely, the 16 July 2007 attack against a UNIFIL military police vehicle from the Tanzanian contingent and the 8 January 2008 attack against a vehicle north of Sidon that injured two Irish peacekeepers. Regarding the 16 July attack, a suspect — accused of activating the remote-controlled improvised explosive device involved — is under arrest. He reportedly confessed to the crime and is expected to go on trial later this year. Several other suspects in this attack remain at large. Regarding the 8 January attack, the Lebanese authorities have arrested two suspects from the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp; however, both deny involvement in the crime. The authorities are still searching for a third suspect. The perpetrators of those attacks on UNIFIL must be identified and brought to justice.

IV. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

53. As at 31 May 2008, the total military strength of UNIFIL was 12,400 personnel, with a civilian strength of 317 international and 619 national staff members. On 16 May 2008, a UNIFIL armoured personnel carrier carrying Malaysian soldiers overturned in the vicinity of the town of Srifa in the western sector of the UNIFIL area of operations. One peacekeeper died and five others were wounded, four of them seriously. On 15 June 2008, a UNIFIL armoured personnel carrier carrying Spanish soldiers overturned near the UNIFIL Sector East headquarters in Marjayoun. One peacekeeper died and two others were slightly injured.

54. UNIFIL is currently supported by 52 United Nations Truce Supervision Organization military observers of the Observer Group Lebanon. While the number of observers and their mission remain unchanged, the patrol teams have moved from their three existing patrol bases and are now co-located in two UNIFIL positions, one in Sector East and the other in Sector West, providing for enhanced liaison, security and logistics. The former patrol bases are now used by UNIFIL as permanent observation posts.

55. I am grateful that, following the withdrawal of contingents from Finland, Ireland and Qatar, as noted in my previous report, Indonesia and Malaysia have

agreed to supplement their current contributions to the Force. Indonesia has pledged to deploy a Force protection company to secure the expanded Naqura headquarters compound as well as additional personnel within the Force headquarters support company and international military police. Meanwhile, Malaysia, in addition to being assigned its own area of responsibility for its current contribution, has pledged to deploy an additional infantry company elsewhere in the area of operations.

56. While a limited number of military community outreach units and civil-military coordination military personnel have deployed to the mission, I would like to emphasize the need for additional deployments in order to further enhance critical relations with local communities. A major construction project is being undertaken at Naqura headquarters to cater to the expanded mission's work and living accommodation needs and to make UNIFIL compliant with United Nations security recommendations.

57. At the end of February 2008, Germany handed over leadership of the Maritime Task Force to the European Maritime Force, a European naval initiative of France, Italy, Portugal and Spain, currently under the command of Italy. The Maritime Task Force currently comprises four frigates, eight patrol boats and one auxiliary supply ship. On the basis of a recent ship-to-task analysis and with flexible tasking of existing assets, the present Force composition is sufficient to fulfil the mission.

58. In line with the second comprehensive review of the Strategic Military Cell, and taking into consideration the decision of the General Assembly in its resolution 62/265, the Strategic Military Cell will undergo a phased downsizing aimed at the full integration of its functions within the reinforced Office of Military Affairs of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

V. Observations

59. The violence that engulfed Lebanon early in May threatened to lead to a full-scale sectarian conflict that could have had consequences beyond the country's borders. With the Doha agreement, there are new opportunities for the Lebanese people to consolidate the country's political stability and create an environment conducive to further addressing the critical challenges facing the country. I look forward to the speedy establishment of a national unity Government and to the revitalization of the constitutional institutions of Lebanon, which I believe will help the country make further concrete progress on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

60. While I am mindful of the fact that the violence of May was exacerbated by the prolonged political crisis, the events witnessed during that period illustrated starkly the risks to the foundation of the State of Lebanon posed by the actions of non-State actors. The presence of both Lebanese and non-Lebanese armed groups outside the control of the Government undermines the consolidation of the authority and stability of the Lebanese State and is incompatible with that objective. Therefore, I welcome and strongly encourage the dialogue that the leaders of Lebanon have committed themselves to pursuing on the reinforcement of the authority of the State over its territory and its relations with such groups. Furthermore, I note positively the commitment of President Sleiman to leading a

national process to address this issue, which remains a key aspect of resolution 1701 (2006).

61. The emergence of several positive indicators in the region may also offer the opportunity for further progress on the implementation of key aspects of resolution 1701 (2006). I am encouraged by the various signals from President Al-Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the establishment of diplomatic ties between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon, in keeping with the provisions of resolution 1680 (2006). Furthermore, I urge both parties to capitalize on this potential momentum and to work together towards the delineation of their common border in accordance with resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1680 (2006). It is my belief that the establishment of diplomatic relations and common border delineation will be of mutual benefit for Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, and is important for addressing a number of key elements of resolution 1701 (2006).

62. I am encouraged by the renewed declarations from the international community on the importance of finding a solution to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area. I plan to strengthen the diplomatic process aimed at resolving this key issue in accordance with paragraph 10 of resolution 1701 (2006). I will also continue my efforts to investigate the implications of the interim proposal contained in the seven-point plan of the Government of Lebanon, and I will continue my consultations with all relevant parties and keep the Council informed. Progress on this cannot be separated from the principles and elements required for the permanent ceasefire and long-term solution identified in resolution 1701 (2006).

63. I believe also that we can make further progress on the issue of Ghajar and the adjacent area north of the Blue Line. I call upon the Governments of Lebanon and Israel to reply positively to the letters sent by the UNIFIL Force Commander containing a proposal that would ensure the full withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from that area in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006), taking into consideration the legitimate humanitarian concerns of the local population.

64. I am pleased that the cessation of hostilities was adhered to during the reporting period. As a result, we have witnessed the longest period of relative stability in the area in many years. The efforts of the Lebanese Armed Forces and of UNIFIL continued towards the further stabilization of the situation in the area of operations.

65. However, the presence of unidentified armed elements in the UNIFIL area of operations, coupled with incidents of restriction of the Force's movement and the monitoring of its operations, are a source of serious concern. They raise tensions and cannot but cast doubt on the motives of those involved. I underline the importance of ensuring that the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River is free of unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons. I call on the Government of Lebanon to ensure the Force's full freedom of movement in its area of operations and reiterate my call on all parties to abide by their stated commitments to resolution 1701 (2006).

66. I remain concerned that the air violations by Israel not only continued unabated during the reporting period, but also reached record levels during the months of March and April 2008. I call on Israel to cease all overflights, as they are violations of resolution 1701 (2006) and cause tension among the local population, in addition to undermining the credibility of UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces and their efforts to carry out their mandated activities.

67. I am grateful to all troop-contributing countries for their ongoing commitment to UNIFIL and to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). I emphasize once again the need for continued support for UNIFIL, including the commitment to contribute the troops and assets necessary to enable the Force to efficiently and effectively perform all of its mandated activities on land and at sea. I wish to strongly commend the UNIFIL Force Commander and the military and civilian peacekeeping personnel who continue to play a critical role in helping to promote peace and stability in southern Lebanon. At the same time, I remain concerned for the safety and security of United Nations personnel and urge all parties to abide by their obligation to ensure their safety and security.

68. The Lebanese Armed Forces is the Force's key partner in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). I am pleased with the expansion of coordinated activities between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces and emphasize the need for such activities to increase in number and intensify in the future. However, the Lebanese Armed Forces will remain under considerable pressure in the carrying out of its heavy responsibilities, particularly in the aftermath of the May events and the continuing clashes in some parts of Lebanon. I reiterate that the support of the international community is vital to assist it in becoming an adequately equipped and capable force, able to assume effective security responsibility over the current area of operations of UNIFIL.

69. The full implementation of the arms embargo imposed by resolution 1701 (2006) is an indispensable and fundamental provision of the resolution. It must be observed immediately, comprehensively and without exception. Regional parties that maintain ties with Hizbullah and other groups in Lebanon are obliged to respect and abide fully by the arms embargo on Lebanon, violations of which constitute serious violations of Lebanese sovereignty and threaten to destabilize Lebanon and the region as a whole.

70. I welcome the determination of the Government of Lebanon to enhance its overall border-management capacity. I believe that a clearly defined Government strategy will be necessary to lay the foundations for an effective and increasingly integrated border-management system. The ongoing assistance of the international community will also be key, and I call on donors to ensure that they provide coherent and well-coordinated support for the Government of Lebanon in that regard.

71. I reiterate with urgency my call on the Government of Israel to provide detailed technical strike data on the type, quantity and specific coordinates of the sub-munitions fired during the 2006 conflict. That crucial information would greatly enhance the rate at which clearance operations are proceeding in southern Lebanon and reduce the number of incidents for both civilians and mine-clearance experts.

72. I remain concerned at the living conditions in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and in particular by the conditions facing displaced Palestinians in the Nahr al-Bared camp and the Lebanese communities surrounding it. While some progress has been made towards addressing the immediate needs of the people affected by the 2007 conflict there, much work remains to be done, which will require the sustained support of Member States. In that regard, I would like to express my appreciation for the support extended by Member States at the international donor conference held in Vienna on 23 June for the reconstruction of the Nahr al-Bared camp, where an initial sum of $112 million was pledged.

73. I would like to express my appreciation to those Member States that have provided, and continue to offer, financial and technical support to Lebanon. That country's efforts to move forward will require well-engineered and synchronized support on the part of the international community, on which I call to consider providing further assistance to Lebanon in its reconstruction and development efforts. I also urge all States to fulfil the pledges already made at the Paris III conference in 2007.

74. Overall, there are emerging possibilities for progress on key aspects of resolution 1701 (2006). I call upon the parties to seize the opportunities that may arise in order to generate further progress towards a lasting solution between Israel and Lebanon. The United Nations reiterates its commitment to supporting the parties in their efforts to that end.

75. It continues to be my profound conviction that we must exert all possible efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which remains interdependent with the full territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon.

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